

House Republican Press Release

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U.S. Rep. Shays, Sen. Freedman, Reps Stripp, Boucher, Other Legislators, Re-Affirm Support for Plan to Bury Power Line



U.S. Representative Christopher Shays, R- 4th District, state Senator Judith G. Freedman, R-26th District, and state representatives John E. Stripp, R-135th District, and Antonietta “Toni” Boucher, R- 143rd District, and several other Fairfield County legislators, have re-affirmed their strong support for a proposal that would require sections

of a planned electric power line that would be built between Middletown and Norwalk (and would pass through Easton, Weston and Wilton) to be buried in sensitive locations along the proposed route.

In a letter to Anne Bartosewicz, of Northeast Utilities, and John Prete, of United Illuminating, which was initiated by Congressman Shays and Senator Freedman, the legislators noted that ISO New England (ISO-NE), in testimony filed with the Connecticut Siting Council, which will be considering the utilities’ Phase II application for the project in upcoming hearings, expressed concern about the proposal to bury some sections of the line, stating that it “does not appear to provide for reliability,” according to the letter.

The legislators’ letter noted that in its previous testimony relating to the project, ISO-New England, while raising concerns about “the amount of undergrounding” envisaged for the project, had ultimately endorsed the proposal filed by the utilities with the Siting Council.

“ISO-New England’s apparent decision to reverse its earlier support for a plan that we thought most interested parties had previously agreed upon is a matter of considerable concern to me,” Representative Stripp said. “The people who live in the communities that would be affected by this project were nearly unanimous in their opposition to an overhead power line that would be harmful to the environment, threaten public health and lower property values.”

“As a legislator who vigorously opposed this project in its original form and who supports the proposal currently pending before the Siting Council, I urge United Illuminating and Northeast Utilities to maintain their support for burying portions of the power line that would negatively impact sensitive areas along the proposed route,” Representative Stripp said. “Although I would have preferred to have the proposed power

line completely buried along the entire route, I gave my reluctant support to the current proposal with the understanding that there would be no significant changes to it – especially with regard to the sections that are to be placed underground. If the utilities change the current proposal based on ISO-New England’s objections to it, I will file testimony with the Siting Council urging rejection of the application.”

“With the breakthroughs in electrical engineering technology that have taken place throughout the world over the past few years, burying power lines underground should be the standard procedure for all new projects like this. It would significantly reduce the kinds of safety, health, environment and reliability problems that relate to utility companies’ apparent preference for overhead power lines. We want to ensure that all Connecticut consumers have abundant and reliable electrical power in the years ahead - but we also want residents to be healthy enough to enjoy the benefits it provides,” Representative Boucher said.

“Irrespective of this latest, contradictory testimony from ISO-NE, we fully expect the utilities will continue to vigorously advocate for the proposed alternative you (Northeast Utilities and United Illuminating) have proposed,” the legislators’ letter states.

“Undoubtedly you recognize that ISO-NE are not experts on underground transmission technology, and that unlike the Siting Council, they do not take into consideration many critical factors including environmental or health impacts.”

“After three years working on this issue, finding common ground in Phase One, we come to you in good faith that you will make certain to defend your application before the Siting Council. We want to make it clear that we will work with you in any way necessary to support your efforts to place the lines underground to the maximum extent as you move forward in providing the Connecticut Siting Council with the evidence required to remain firm on your preferred route as proposed,” the letter states.

Other legislators who signed the letter include: Sen. William Nickerson, R-36th District, Sen. George Gunther, R-21st District, Sen. Ernest E. Newton, II, D-23rd District, Sen. Robert L. Genuario, R-25th District, Rep. Jack Stone, R-134th District, Rep. John Hetherington, R-125th District, Rep. Livvy R. Floren, R-149th District, Rep. Lile R. Gibbons, R-150th District, Rep. Claudia “Dolly” Powers, R-151st District, Rep. T. R. Rowe, R-123rd District, Rep. Lawrence G. Miller, R-122nd District, Rep. Lawrence Cafero, R-142nd District, Rep. David Scribner, R-107th District, Rep. Cathy Tymniak, R-133rd District, Rep. Raymond C. Kalinowski, R-100th District, Rep. Carl J. Dickman, R-132nd District, Rep. Hank Bielawa, R-2nd District, Rep. Bob Duff, D-137th District, and Rep. Bob Godfrey, D-110th District.